



Immigration Status and Health Care in Canada

"There are none who are voiceless, just those who are the preferably unheard or the deliberately silenced."

-Arundhati Roy

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Outline

- What is 'Health'?
- What is 'Status'?
- Context
- Categories
- Barriers
- So... what should I do?



What is 'Health'?

- **Peoples' Health Movement**

***'Health** is a social, economic and political issue and above all a fundamental human right.*

Inequality, poverty, exploitation, violence and injustice are at the root of ill-health and the deaths of poor and marginalized people.'



“Aisha” -- No Insurance

- 17 year old female
- Sponsored by father, then abandoned and left without status
- Sickle cell crisis
- Went to ED -> no care w/o registration fee (\$350)
- In waiting room in extreme pain until became unconscious
- Only then admitted for IV treatment
- Billed \$10,000



What is 'Status'?

- Citizens
- Permanent residents – Immigrants
- Refugees
- Precarious status migrants
 - Temporary foreign workers (SAWs, LICs)
 - Denied refugee claimants but requesting H&C
- Non-status migrants
 - Denied refugee claimants
 - Persons who stay beyond visitor/work/student permits
 - Undocumented migrants



Context

- Reasons for migration
- Myths
 - Non-status immigrants take away jobs
 - Non-status people don't pay taxes
 - Non-status people are on welfare and use up our social services
 - Non-status people are criminals



But we have medicare!

Despite “universal” publicly funded health insurance, many people living in Canada do not have access to healthcare



Some statistics...

- Current estimations: Up to 500,000 non-status migrants in Canada
 - Roughly half in GTA alone (Cynthia Wright, Khandor et al)
- CHCs only being able to see about 12,000 uninsured people (AOHC 2004 report)



Categories of Insurance Coverage

- Citizens - OHIP
- Permanent residents – OHIP with 3 mo wait
- Refugees - IFH
- TFW - OHIP with 3 mo wait
- Refugee claimants and denied refugee claimants in H&C process - IFH
- Non-status & undocumented migrants - Uninsured



Sabrina -- 3 month wait

- 28 year old permanent resident
 - Came to Canada with \$16,000
- 5 ½ months pregnant
- Could not afford antenatal care
- Emergency C-section
- Billed \$5,000



Angel -- IFH

- 7 year old boy, refugee from Mexico
- IFH certificate expired – awaiting new one
- Had a head injury - laceration
- Brought to hospital by mother
- Refused service w/o \$650
- Went to walk-in: \$60
- 2 weeks later – received \$650 bill from hospital



Barriers

- **Status is a key determinant of health**
- **Cost**
- **Threat of:**
 - Deportation and detention
 - Refusal of care by front-line admin
 - Reporting domestic violence to police
 - Raids
 - School
 - Food Banks
 - Lack of Housing



Changes in the Immigration System

- Dismantling of the immigration and refugee system
 - 2010 Refugee acceptance rates to be cut by 60%
 - New Bill to create 2 track system 'safe' vs. 'unsafe' countries
- Raids in schools May 2009, women's shelters Feb/Mar 2010
- **'Permanently temporary'**
 - Changes to TFWP



So... what should I do?

- Advocate for individual patients
 - Question stereotypes
 - Do not mislead patients
 - Ensure OHIP fees
- Maintain confidentiality – never tell police about status
 - Always be careful what you do with information
- Educate yourself and others
 - Immigration system
 - Forms of insurance (IFH, OHIP, private)
 - Options for care (CHCs, Scarborough clinic for uninsured)



Get involved!

- Health for All
 - Universal and equitable coverage for all who live in Ontario
- Access Without Fear
 - Policy changes; charity vs. systemic change
 - DADT
- Migrant justice mobilizing - May Day, G8/G20



Thank You

www.health4all.ca

- We are a multidisciplinary group of migrants, healthcare professionals, students, activists and allies. We believe health is a fundamental human right and a matter of social justice. Health requires not only access to services for maintaining physical and mental health, but requires full economic, social, environmental, and political rights for all people.